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THREE HOURS



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“CONSUMMATUM EST.”

(Michael Angelo.)

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The Devotion

OF THE

THREE HOURS' AGONY

ON GOOD FRIDAY

Translated from the Spanish Original

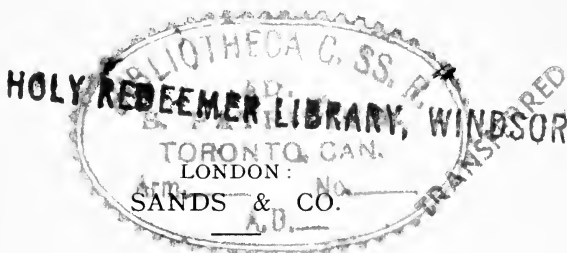
OF

FATHER ALONSO MESIA S.J.

WITH AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

BY

FATHER HERBERT THURSTON S.J.



MDCCCXCIX.



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“And I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced : and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over Him as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born.”—ZACHARIAS xii. 10.

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TRANSFERRED



“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.”—ST. JOHN iii. 14, 15.

(From a fresco of Michael Angelo on the roof of the Sistine Chapel.)

PREFATORY NOTE.

IT is our Saviour Himself who has drawn the parallel between the lifting up of the serpent in the desert and the lifting up of the Son of Man upon the Cross. The inference seems warranted, that if through the bitter death and agony of Christ our Lord, "a worm and no man," we are to be saved from perishing, we must not ourselves remain entirely passive, but must try to expel the venom of evil passions from our veins by long and earnest contemplation of the Crucified. "*They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.*" Can we find any better way of contributing to the fulfilment of this prophecy than that afforded by the devotion, now happily become so popular, of the "Three Hours" Agony on Good Friday?

The object which this little book is intended to serve is twofold. It purports in the first place, by means of an historical introduction, and by an accurate translation of the author's original text, to set before English readers the primitive conception of the devotion of the Three Hours, from which, wisely or unwisely, the modern adaptations have notably diverged. Secondly, it aims at providing a manual for the use of communities, or individuals, who are unable to attend any of the churches where these meditations are publicly preached. There must be many who would gladly associate themselves in private with that great outpouring of compassion and supplication which is being offered to God all over the world by so many devout congregations and religious communities at the same hour. This is rendered quite possible for all by the use of Father Mesia's little volume of meditations and instructions. Further, the practice of this pious exercise of the Three Hours need not by any means be confined to Good

Friday alone. It is probable indeed, as will be seen from the Historical Introduction which follows, that the devotion had its origin in a devout commemoration of the Passion of our Lord originally practised by a confraternity which met for the purpose on every Friday of the year. That confraternity was honoured with the appropriate name of the *Escuela de Cristo*, the School of Christ ; and surely there is no school where the lessons of our Divine Master may so readily be learned as in the meditation of His dying utterances upon the Cross. It has been well said by Cardinal Bellarmine, that the Seven Words spoken by our Saviour in the three hours of His agony are a compendium of all that He did and suffered during the thirty-three years that He lived upon earth.

In referring to some old volumes of the *Guardian*, to trace the spread of the " Three Hours " service among the Anglican churches of this country, the following remarks were met with, in connection with the first introduction of the " Three Hours," nearly

thirty years ago, at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge. They seem worthy of quotation here, as an appreciation from an Anglican point of view of a truth upon which nearly all Christians must be agreed. Speaking of the congregation who were present at the service, the writer says :

Hard-headed men of business, Members of Parliament, and many of both sexes, who are better known in the world of fashion than in the assemblies of the sanctuary—were there, some of them impelled no doubt by nothing better than curiosity, but the feeling of curiosity was plainly and speedily dispelled by the awe and fervour of an unwonted solemnity, making itself visible here and there in reddened eyes and tear-stained cheeks. The service of the Three Hours is becoming evidently and rapidly popular. Ought it to be encouraged? It has its dangers unquestionably—the danger, amongst others, resulting from the tendency of all excited feelings to evaporate in mere emotion, leaving the heart colder and more callous than it was. But then, on the other hand, the feelings *must* be roused if the appeals of religion are to do any good. Feelings are the raw material of character, and the system of the

Church offers a thousand opportunities for turning them to account and preventing them from running to seed.

By the kind permission of the author of the *Life of Mother Henrietta Kerr*, a set of prayers to the Five Wounds, translated by Mother Kerr from the Italian, have been printed at the end of this little book. Also a rough bibliography of writers upon the Seven Words, founded mainly on a list given in Cancellieri's *Settimana Santa*, has been added in an Appendix. The prayer found in the works of Venerable Bede, and belonging seemingly to the eighth century, which is prefixed to this volume, has been inserted as the earliest known attempt to number and group together the dying utterances of our Lord upon the Cross. It will be noticed that the order of enumeration differs slightly from that now commonly adopted.

HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.

Feast of St. Gregory the Great, 1899.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

THERE is a tiny little booklet in English, printed in London as far back as 1806,¹ in which is set forth, to use the words of the title-page, "the Devotion of the Three Hours of the Agony of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, as practised every year on Good Friday in the Church del Giesu (*sic*) at Rome, from the 18th to the 21st hour, viz., from 12 to 3 o'clock, with a Plenary Indulgence to all who assist thereat in the above mentioned Church, granted by his Holiness Pius VI., Anno 1789. Originally composed at Lima in Peru, in the Spanish Language. By the Rev. F. Alphonsa

¹ This little volume (96 pp. 32mo) was "printed by Keating, Brown, and Co., No. 37 Duke Street, Grosvenor Square," in 1806. This edition is unknown to De Backer and Sommervogel, who only mention the two later editions, one of Dublin in 1844, and the other of London (Dolman) 1854.

(*sic*) Messia, S.J.” Seeing how popular the devotion of the Three Hours has become in these later times, not only among Father Mesia’s own co-religionists in every part of the world, but amongst Anglicans also, it has seemed worth while to reprint this little volume with an historical introduction, and with such few corrections as a collation with the original Spanish seemed to necessitate.¹ The plan prescribed in it differs in so many ways from the arrangement now usually followed, that no other excuse can be needed for inviting attention to the earlier phases of the history of this favourite Good Friday service.

Father Alonso Mesia, who first introduced this pious custom, was born at Pacaraos in Peru, on January 1st, 1665, his father being at that time *corregidor*, the chief civil magistrate, of the district. It is needless to dwell upon the details of his life. At an early age he became a Jesuit, and spent many years in the College of San Pablo, Lima, where he filled

¹ The English version referred to was made from the Italian.

various posts of authority. He is described as a man of truly apostolic spirit.¹ "His duties in the confessional," we are told, "his daily sermon in the market-place, his frequent visits to the prisons and hospitals, his conferences and literary undertakings, absorbed the whole of his time, without ever leaving him a moment to rest. In spite of the many ties and anxieties which fell to him as Rector of the house in which he resided, he was engaged unceasingly in works of charity."²

It was not strange that he endeared himself greatly to the hearts of the people, so much so that when the General of the Society in 1705 appointed him Provincial of the mission

¹ Before he was called by obedience to labour in the capital, we are told that he spent some time in studying the native languages of Peru, and in preaching to the Indians.

² General M. de Mendiburu, *Diccionario Historico-Biografico del Peru*, vol. v. p. 310. Father Mesia's Life was written by a fellow-Jesuit, Father Juan Jose de Salazar, and was printed the year after his death. The book seems to be very rare, and I have unfortunately been unable to procure sight of a copy. It was unknown to Carayon, and seems to be incorrectly described in the folio edition of De Backer.

of Quito,¹ an uproar took place at the idea of his leaving the city, and it was found impossible to carry the nomination into effect. Six years later, however, he was appointed Provincial of Peru, and, as this did not take him away permanently from Lima, the citizens seem to have celebrated the occasion with public rejoicings. Father Alonso was also appointed, at various times, *calificador* of the Inquisition, Doctor of the University of St. Mark, &c., with many other distinctions.

As an illustration of the authority which he enjoyed, we may mention that the then Viceroy of Peru, the Marquis of Castellfuerte, who is described as a man of stern and inflexible character, took Father Mesia for his confessor, and “paid extraordinary respect to his decisions.” The following letter is cited by General Mendiburu in proof of this statement. It was written to Father Mesia by the Viceroy, from Callao, in 1725, at a

¹ There were seemingly two Provinces of the Society of Jesus in these regions, one called the Province of Peru, which had its head-quarters at Lima ; the other known from its principal residence as the Province of Quito.

time when the latter was overwhelmed with the pressure of business.

Most Reverend Father,—I forward the enclosed case (*consulta*) to obtain your Reverence's opinion upon it. The matter is so important that I desire to have a safe conscience, and to settle everything in accordance with justice, and I was resolved to take no step of any sort which was not guided by so Christian a rule as is the prudent, learned, and holy decision of your Reverence. I remain, with deep veneration and obedience, &c., at the feet of your Reverence,

CASTELLFUERTE.

Father Mesia died in 1732, at the age of seventy-seven. He is described by the editor of the most authoritative modern work on Peruvian history as a man conspicuous for his humility, his spirit of penance, his charity, and his uprightness. "He rendered many services to religion, and helped to elevate the moral tone of his countrymen, especially showing great devotedness in assisting the families of those who were ruined by the earthquake of 1687."¹

¹ Mendiburu, l.c. p. 313.

It is in connection with this last-named event that the Devotion of the Three Hours seems to have had its origin. It has been asserted, and the probabilities appear to confirm the statement, that the terrible catastrophe of 1687, which was only eclipsed by the still more disastrous visitation which in 1746 laid the city of Lima in ruins, first suggested to the holy Jesuit the idea of propitiating the offended majesty of God, by some conspicuous and public act of atonement. The earthquake of 1687 actually took place on the 20th of October, but six months before, on the night of the 1st of April, which that year fell in Easter week, a premonitory warning had been given by a shock so severe, that it awoke all the sleeping inhabitants of Lima, and brought them out of their beds into the streets.¹ If I am not misinterpreting the description given

¹ See the account printed in the *Collecion de las Relaciones de los mas notables Terremotos*, &c., edited by Colonel de Cavalry M. de Odriozola, pp. 25 and 199. It seems characteristic of the South American republics, that all the literary men who are not ecclesiastics, are invariably either colonels or generals. Colonel de Odriozola, if I mistake not, is principal librarian of the National Library.

in the printed "Relations," our Father Alonso was undoubtedly one of the preachers who bade the people take warning, and threatened them with further chastisements if they neglected the admonition. After this, according to the same account, there followed a still more startling portent. An image of our Lady in a private chapel was observed, on the feast of the Visitation (July 2nd), to shed tears and to be bathed in moisture, in a way of which no natural explanation could be given.

I should be sorry to commit myself to any expression of opinion regarding the authenticity of this marvel, but there can be no doubt that the believers in it were thoroughly sincere, and that the phenomenon was repeatedly observed by crowds of people between the beginning of July and the time of the earthquake, and even afterwards. A good deal of popular excitement seems to have resulted, and after the awful catastrophe of October 20th, the terrified inhabitants, fearing to trust themselves inside the churches,

half of which were in ruins,¹ erected some temporary altars in the great open square of the city. There the statue was solemnly enshrined, and became the object of much popular devotion. To recall the memory of this terrible chastisement, an annual celebration was instituted on the anniversary of its occurrence, which was preceded by an eight days' mission. The closing ceremony took place on the 20th of October of each year, in the Jesuit church of San Pablo, to which Father Mesia was attached, and it was marked both by a General Communion and by a solemn procession, in which the Viceroy, the Audiencia, and the Cathedral Chapter took part. Much evidence might be produced of the fervour with which this custom was

¹ Veráanse deshazer Torres noveles
Desde la alta Linterna al fundamento
Y à las basas unir los Capiteles
Las Columnas en impetu violento :
Las que sustentan arcos y linteles
Máquinas, al furioso movimiento
La Mole muderán pues el desmonte,
Si Edificio caerá, se alzarà Monte.

(Barnuero, *Lima Fundada*, canto vi. stanza lxxx.)

kept up for long years afterwards,¹ but we may content ourselves here with quoting an accidental reference to it contained in a diary written after the still more terrible earthquake of 1746.² Under date October 20, 1747, the writer states :

On this day there took place in the evening the supplication before the Holy Crucifix of Contrition (*la rogativa al Sancto Cristo de la Contricion*), and the concluding service of the week's mission instituted by Father Francis Xavier, a former Provincial of the Society of Jesus. This is usually conducted by the Jesuit Fathers in the church of their College of San Pablo, and during it they preach discourses upon suitable subjects to crowded congregations,

¹ There is mention of it, for instance, in a little four-page leaflet entitled, *Memorias y Noticias de los Sucesos sobresalientes en esta ciudad de Lima, 1723*; and in the Life of Father Francis del Castillo, S.J., by Buendia, p. 643. Also in the poem of Peralta Barnuevo, entitled, *Lima Fundada*, bk. vi. st. 90.

Continuo un Terremoto en muchos dias
Conserverarà en los pechos los horrores :
Memoria de tan duras agonias
De annuos ruegos seràn sacros fervores
Así havrán dado en Oblaciones pias
Culto à eternos Divinos Protectores ;
En que el recuerdo hará con accion clara
Lo triste en el dolor, gozo en el Ara.

² Printed by Odriozola, *Terremotos*, p. 126.

with great fruit to souls. And on the same day in the morning, in memory of the terrible destruction caused to life and property by the earthquake of Oct. 20th, 1687, and in commemoration also of the sweat and tears of the miraculous image of the Candelaria,¹ . . . there was held in the presence of the Viceroy, &c., the solemn celebration of the festival vowed and endowed by the city under the title of Our Lady of the Warning. On this festival there have been accustomed to communicate in the church of San Pablo as many as ten, twelve, and even fourteen thousand persons, but in this year, 1747, both on account of the multitude of devout persons who have died, as also on account of the large numbers who have left the city, the Hosts consumed in distributing Holy Communion hardly amounted to four thousand.

Now although in the impossibility of consulting the Life of Father Mesia, it would be dangerous to speak too positively, there is strong reason to believe that in the *Rogativa* before “the Holy Crucifix of Contrition,” alluded to in the foregoing extract, we

¹ In this miraculous statue the Child in our Lady’s arms grasped a candle. The statue was hence known as *La Candelaria*.

should trace the first germ of the Devotion of the Three Hours, afterwards practised on Good Friday alone. It seems clear from other sources that certain exercises of piety were performed on Fridays by a confraternity directed by Father Mesia, under the name of the "School of Christ," in a chapel of the church of San Pablo, in which were venerated both the above-mentioned statue of the Candelaria, and the Crucifix known as the *Cristo de la Contricion*.¹ The devotion excited by, and the fruit to souls which resulted from, these exercises were evidently very remarkable, and we can well believe that some similar practice of piety, extending over the space of three hours, may have been devised by Father Mesia to mark the greatest Friday of the year, the day which commemorates the Passion and Death of our Saviour. The need of some special form of

¹ These facts are attested by the Life of Father Castillo, p. 643; and by an earlier passage in the document already cited in *Terremotos*, p. 125. Cf. the Preface by Father J. E. Uriarte, S.J., contributed to the Spanish Edition of Cardinal Bellarmine's *De Septem Verbis prolatis in Cruce*.

supplication and atonement may very possibly have been further brought home to the inhabitants of Lima by one of the numerous minor shocks of earthquake which alarmed the citizens between 1687 and 1746.¹ Be this however as it may, we shall do well to turn now to the Preface of the tiny booklet already referred to, which, being founded on the earliest printed copy of the "Three Hours," may be quoted entire. No attempt has been made to alter the writer's phraseology.

Alphonso Mesia, an apostolic man of the Society of Jesus, was the first who introduced this devotion at his native city, Lima. It began at mid-day, and continued till three in the afternoon on Good Friday: and so great was the spiritual joy and consolation felt by those who assisted him on this occasion, that it met with general approbation, and afterwards made a rapid progress.

At first the servant of God, accompanied by several devout persons, practised it privately in his

¹ There were earthquakes in 1688, 1694, 1697, 1698, 1699, 1713, 1715, 1724, and 1725. I have before me the contemporary *Relacion* of that of 1699. Even on this occasion sixteen persons perished in the ruins, and much damage was done to property.

own church ; but the year following, so much was it thronged by a concourse of people, anxious to assist at a devotion so properly adapted to the day, that the pressure of the crowd obliged him to go into the pulpit. From thence it diffused itself thro' nearly all the parish churches and monasteries of religious in the city of Lima: from thence over Peru, Chili, and Quito; and at length transferred itself even to Carthagena, Panama, Mexico, and other provinces of the kingdom.

But as the genius of mankind is various, no sooner had this devotion transplanted itself into different places, among persons who had not seen it practised at Lima, than there appeared so great a diversity in the books of the Three Hours,¹ that one could scarcely believe it to be the same devotion which had begun at Peru, the method was now become so confused and difficult, whereas at first it had been plain and easy. To apply a remedy to so great an inconvenience, it was

¹ Considerable differences may be noticed between the edition which must be considered most authoritative, that edited by Father Uriarte in 1886, and another copy which I have before me, published by the *Propaganda Católica* of Madrid, in 1877. Still further removed from the original text of Father Mesia, is a French version of the devotion, printed by Curmer, at the end of a little book on the Stations of the Cross. This last bears hardly any resemblance whatever to the first form of the meditations as originally designed by their author.

thought necessary to translate the author's book, and give an explanation of the manner in which it was practised by himself, in order that by printing and publishing both, a more general uniformity might prevail in the performance of a devotion which was so rapidly extending itself among the faithful in other cities and provinces.

Good Friday being therefore a day held in such high veneration among the faithful, it were to be wished that, on so remarkable a day, Christians would emulate with each other in the fervent practice of the Devotion to the Three Hours of the Agony of Jesus Christ, our ever blessed Redeemer ; the method whereof is as follows :

A crucifix, or image of Jesus crucified, being placed on the altar, with a convenient number of lights (decorated in some places in so solemn a manner, that the very sight alone inspires respect and veneration), the priest, who is the director of the function, placing himself before the altar, or else in the pulpit, begins by making the sign of the cross ; and after having invoked the Holy Ghost, he makes a short exhortation, in order to persuade his hearers how just and necessary a duty it is for a Christian to accompany his Redeemer during the Three Hours of His Agony on the Cross, which, out of His immense charity, He suffered for our redemption ; a subject which must

naturally excite the most tender devotion. He then proceeds to explain, as well what the Saints have said as what they have learned by revelation, on the utility of accompanying Jesus Christ in His agony, in order that we may become worthy to be accompanied by Him at ours. Much may be learned on this article from Albert the Great and St. Bernard, from the Lives of St. Catharine of Sienna, St. Gertrude, St. M. Magdalene de Pazzi, and many others. Afterwards, the priest having recited with the people something adapted to the subject, such as the *Salve*, or other prayers to our Blessed Lady of Dolours, and all the assistants being seated, he begins to read the Introduction, at the conclusion whereof all kneel and meditate, in silence, on some point of the Passion, whilst the choir, accompanied by the harmonious melody of instruments, sings something analogous to it.

The priest then having read leisurely with a tender affectionate voice the First Word, the people kneel and recite or sing some stanzas or verses illustrative thereof. At the end of the canticle the priest rises, and the people still remaining on their knees, recite alternately with him ten *Paters* and *Aves*, or any other prayer that may be found at the end of each *word*; and this method is observed at the termination of each of the Seven Words.

We must here observe, that the Director should confine himself so strictly to time as not to fall short of, or exceed three hours : for, as the intent of this devotion is, that it should finish precisely at the time that Jesus Christ expired ; so the recital of it must be performed slower or faster in proportion to the measure of the time that remains ; and if he perceives that there remains more than sufficient, he may add a short exhortation, or such of the canticles as may be suitable, in order to arrive just at the expiration of the Three Hours. When this term approaches, after the *seventh word*, the priest reads, with many pauses of tenderness and devotion, the last apostrophe at the end of the book. Should there yet remain any time, he says the salutations to the five sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, which may be also found at the end ; but if there be no time to spare, they are omitted.

On the dial-hand's approaching the point of Three, all kneel down, whilst the choir, with a tender voice, sings the *Credo*, measured in such a manner, that when the clock strikes they sing, *Crucifixus et mortuus est* ; at which words the priest rises, and with a loud and compassionate voice exclaims, *Jesus Christ is dead !—our Redeemer has expired !—our Father has ceased to live !—* Then with great affection he pronounces an exhortation to tears of compassion, of tenderness, and

of sorrow for sin ; addressing himself, alternately, to Jesus Christ, to His most Holy Mother of Dolours, to sinners, &c., when all finishes with a fervent Act of Contrition.¹

It will be noticed from this account that the devotion, as originally devised by Father Mesia, and as practised in Italy in the early years of the present century, differs in more than one respect from the plan now commonly followed. What we are now accustomed to is a series of discourses with musical interludes, the congregation kneeling only during the recital of a few vocal prayers. The original conception was a three hours' meditation made by the people themselves, upon their knees for the most part, points being read aloud for convenience sake at suitable intervals. The only extempore discourse seems to have been an exhortation delivered at the beginning, with, in some cases, a similar address at the close, after the three hours had really been completed. Even in Spain this plan seems early to have under-

¹ Preface, iii.—xi.

gone some slight modification. The following description by the unfortunate Blanco White,¹ which belongs presumably to the first decade of this century, will be read with interest :

The practice of continuing in meditation from twelve to three o'clock of this day—the time which our Saviour is supposed to have hung on the Cross—was introduced by the Spanish Jesuits, and partakes of the impressive character which the members of that Order had the art to impart to the religious practices by which they cherish the devotional spirit of the people. The church where the *three hours* is kept, is generally hung in black and made impervious to daylight. A large crucifix is seen on the high altar, under a black canopy, with six unbleached wax-candles, which cast a sombre glimmering on the rest of the church. The females of all ranks occupy, as usual, the centre of the nave, squatting or kneeling on the matted ground, and adding to the dismal appearance of the scene, by the colour of their veils and dresses.

¹ Mr. Blanco White, a Spanish priest of English descent, who joined the Church of England for a while, and ultimately died an Agnostic, was a prominent figure in Oxford society between 1830 and 1840. He is more than once referred to in Cardinal Newman's *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics*.

Just as the clock strikes¹ twelve, a priest in his cloak and cassock ascends the pulpit, and delivers a preparatory address of his own composition. He then reads the printed meditation on the *Seven Words*, or Sentences spoken by Jesus on the Cross, allotting to each such a portion of time as that, with the interludes of music which follow each of the readings, the whole may not exceed three hours. The music is generally good and appropriate, and if a sufficient band can be collected, well repays to an amateur the inconvenience of a crowded church, where, from the want of seats, the male part of the congregation are obliged either to stand or kneel.

It is, in fact, one of the best works of Haydn, composed a short time ago for some gentlemen of Cadiz, who showed both their taste and liberality in thus procuring this master-piece of harmony for the use of their country. It has been lately published in Germany under the title of *Sette Parole*.¹

Haydn's music for the Seven Words was originally designed as a series of short symphonies for instruments only. After some years, however, he modified this plan, arrang-

¹ *Letters from Spain*, pp. 260, 261. By "Don Lucadio Doblado" (*i.e.*, Blanco White). 1825.

ing the music for a chorus, with a *libretto* the source of which has been much disputed and still remains uncertain. In any case, these words have no apparent connection with the *coplas* originally composed by Father Mesia. Haydn¹ himself has left us a brief account of the occasion of his undertaking the *Sette Parole* in the year 1785. He writes concerning it in March, 1801 :

It was about fifteen years ago, that I was asked by one of the Canons of Cadiz to compose a piece of instrumental music on the Seven Words of Jesus on the Cross. At that time it was the custom every year during Lent to perform an Oratorio in the Cathedral at Cadiz, the effect of which was greatly heightened by the *mise-en-scène*. The walls, windows, and pillars of the church were draped in black cloth, and the religious gloom was only

¹ In Pohl's *Biographie Joseph Haydn's* several composers are named who have written upon the Seven Words. Before Haydn's time there were L. Senfl (in the sixteenth century ; cf. *Monatshefte für Musikgeschichte*, 1876, p. 149), J. Glück, H. Schütz, and C. G. Schröter. In the present century there have been Count Castelbarko, Joseph Lutz, Mercadante, Gounod, and Th. Dubois. The last-named, whose beautiful, if slightly theatrical, composition has been performed for the last few years during the Three Hours at the Jesuit Church of Farm Street, London, first published his work in 1870.

lightened by one large lamp hanging in the centre. At mid-day all the doors were closed, and the music commenced. After a fitting prelude, the Bishop ascended the pulpit, recited one of the Seven Words, and gave a meditation on it. When it was ended, he came down from the pulpit and knelt before the altar. This interlude was filled by the music. The Bishop mounted and left the pulpit for a second time, a third time, and so on, and on each occasion, after the close of the address, the orchestra recommenced playing. My composition had to be adapted to this method of execution. It was not an easy task to produce seven *Adagios* in succession, each of which must take about ten minutes to perform, without wearying the audience ; and I soon found that I could not keep rigorously to the prescribed limits of time.¹

In this account it is not very clear whether the meditations were read from a book or

¹ Pohl's *Biographie Joseph Haydn's*, vol. i. p. 214. When Haydn sold the right of reproducing this composition in France to a Parisian publisher, he for a long time remained without payment. At last, when he had almost given up the hope of seeing his money, a box arrived one day from Paris. Haydn got his servant to open it, and found to his astonishment that it contained—a chocolate tart. "What possible use can this be to me?" he grumbled. However, he proceeded to cut it open to give a portion to the servant for his trouble, when out there tumbled a roll of silver pieces.

whether they were spoken discourses. In Italy, at any rate, it seems that the method of Father Mesia was strictly adhered to. None the less, the devotion spread very rapidly there. It is mentioned by Brancadoro, the biographer of Pius VI., that he never failed to attend the Three Hours at the Church of the Gesù, and this Pope granted a Plenary Indulgence, Confession and Communion being of course presupposed, to all who assisted at it. In 1818, according to Cancellieri,¹ the service was held in four or five other places in Rome beside the Gesù, and was known everywhere throughout the world. In England it seems to have been confined at first to a few Jesuit churches, but in the early sixties it was taken up by the Ritualists, and since then has become strangely popular even with Anglicans of Evangelical views. St. Paul's Cathedral, London, has had a Three Hours' service on Good Friday for more than twenty years.² Many of the other Cathedrals have

¹ *Settimana Santa*, Appendix.

² It does not seem easy to obtain accurate information as to the date of the introduction of the Three Hours' Service

followed suit; and there are also, of course, a number of the larger parish churches, into Anglican churches. The following letter, which is quoted in the *Guardian* for March 30th, 1864, may be given for what it is worth. The writer, who signs himself "A Priest who was present," there says: "I believe the English Church is indebted to Mr. Mackonochie for the revival or an adaptation of an admirable ancient Office in commemoration of the Three Hours on the Cross. At all events such an Office was held at St. Alban's [Holborn], and I gladly direct attention to its details. The service began at 2 p.m. with the Litany of the Church. Mr. Mackonochie from the pulpit then explained the outline of the Office, and, with the help of the choir, conducted it. First some general remarks were made upon the whole subject, then the word from the Cross was chanted by the whole choir. This word was taken as a text for a short address or meditation. Then, by invitation, the congregation knelt for a short space in meditation on the points put forth by the preacher, whilst, as he said, the organ played 'soft music.' Lastly a hymn on the Passion to a popular tune was sung. And this completed the first portion of the Office. The same order was followed throughout, and a few words of exhortation concluded the service, which, I was astonished to find, overpassed the allotted time by half an hour. It was a most Catholic and beautiful office, and which any clergyman may adopt. . . ." In an editorial note it is added: "We have heard that there was somewhat of a similar service at St. Matthias', Stoke Newington, which was crowded with worshippers." The services referred to took place in 1864, apparently for the first time. The first English Cathedral to adopt the "Three Hours" was St. Paul's, where a numerously signed petition for its introduction had been sent to the Dean and Chapter. It was held for the first time in 1878. An attempt was made by a Protestant Association to organize a demonstration outside the Cathedral to protest against the service, but the police authorities intimated that no such assembly would be permitted.

besides the more distinctly Ritualistic centres, where the devotion has long been popular. In most of these, if I mistake not, the modern practice is followed of preaching a series of seven or eight little sermons, interrupted by music, but in some a space is left free between each Word for quiet private meditation.

There is, as far as I have seen, an absolutely unanimous agreement in attributing the origin of the Three Hours' service to Father Mesia. Neither is there room for doubt that the received history of its development, by which it is supposed to have spread from Peru to Spain, from Spain to Italy, and thence throughout the Christian world, is strictly accurate. A difficulty, however, has been raised on account of the existence, as far back as the year 1624, of a sermon by a Franciscan Friar, bearing the following title, *Sermo Trihorarius de Præcipuis Dominicæ Passionis Mysteriis habitus ipso die Parasceves* a Fratre Nicolao Orano, Ord. Min., Lovanii, 1624. Curiously as this title seems to anticipate the service now familiar to us, the

book stands alone, and cannot, without further evidence, be pleaded against the clear tradition and the contemporary records which connect this devotion with the name of Father Mesia. In the first place, *Sermo Trihorarius*, as used by a Latinist of that age, might as easily mean a sermon about the Three Hours as a three hours' sermon. It would not, I think, have sounded extravagant then for a preacher to entitle a similar discourse about the Burial of our Lord, &c., *Sermo Triduanus de præcipuis Christi Domini Mysteriis factis in Sepulchro*, where, of course, *Sermo Triduanus* would not mean a sermon three days' long, but a sermon about the three days. However, even granting that the word *Trihorarius* refers to the duration of the discourse, it is possible that the author only wished to recall the fact that he did actually preach on a particular occasion for three hours together. Long sermons were much more in fashion then than they are now. Giacomo Volaterrano, in his diary, printed by Muratori,¹ relates that in the year

¹ *Rerum Italicarum*, xxiv. 130.

1481, on Good Friday, William the Sicilian, of the household of the Cardinal of Amalfi, delivered in the presence of the Pope a discourse on the Passion of our Lord. "He was a man learned in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and he passed in review all the mysteries of the Passion of Jesus Christ, confirming them by the authority and writings of the Hebrews and the Arabs, quoting their very words in their own language. The discourse, although it occupied the space of two hours, nevertheless delighted every one, both for the variety the preacher gave to it, as well as for the sound of the Hebrew and Arabic words, which he pronounced as though they were his own native tongue. Everybody commended the preacher, the Pontiff and the Cardinals among the first."

It seems clear from this account that the impressiveness of "that blessed word Mesopotamia," has not been felt for the first time in our day.

Still more startling must have been the sermon which Father Evangelist Marcellino,

a Franciscan Observant, preached upon the Passion in the Duomo of Florence in 1685, lasting three hours and a half. Cancellieri declares that in his time it was common for Spanish preachers to go beyond two hours, a remark which is well borne out by the satires of Father Isla, in his *Fray Gerundio*.

However, what seems to me decisive in rejecting any claim which might be advanced on behalf of Fra Nicolas Orano, is the absence of any trace that the devotion was taken up by others. Even by the bibliographers of his own Order, as for instance, John à S. Antonio, his book is either overlooked or imperfectly described. The same John à S. Antonio gives an elaborately classified list of Franciscan sermons, and the occasions on which they were preached. In this, Fra Orano's sermon is alluded to, but it stands absolutely alone. To all appearance, he had no imitators even amongst his own Order. We are justified then, it seems to me, in refusing to allow that Father Mesia's claim can be seriously contested until some

evidence is produced of a *custom* of delivering such Three Hour sermons previously to his time.

The only other allusion I have found to any similar practice, is a statement made by Father J. E. de Uriarte, S.J., in his Preface to Bellarmine's *Seven Words*, already referred to. There is a little book, he says, entitled, *Constituciones y Reglas para el gobierno de la Real Congregacion de Indignos Esclavos del SS. Sacramento . . . en su Oratorio publico de la Calle del Olivar* (Constitutions and Rules for the administration of the Royal Confraternity of the Unworthy Slaves of the Most Holy Sacrament . . . in their public Oratory of the Calle del Olivar), in which it is asserted that, "as early as the year 1648, another most devout exercise was established and practised on Good Friday, which consists in the maintaining of an uninterrupted prayer in this Oratory from mid-day until three in the afternoon, in reverence of those same three hours during which our Saviour Jesus Christ hung dying upon the Cross. In order

to arouse the devotion of those present, there are read at intervals the meditations on the Seven Words (las Meditaciones de las *Siete Palabras*) which our Lord spoke at that time.”¹ I must confess that until better evidence is brought, I am inclined to believe that the date 1648 has been accidentally misprinted for 1748. The writer seems to refer to “*the meditations of the Seven Words*,” as to a well-known exercise of devotion. This is intelligible enough in 1748, sixteen years after Father Mesia’s death, but we have no knowledge of any recognized set of meditations to which the words could apply in 1648. Cardinal Bellarmine’s are a great deal too lengthy to have been used for such a purpose.

Finally, there is no difficulty in supposing that the same idea may have occurred independently to two or even to many persons. In Father Mesia’s case the germ fructified and spread. In Fra Orano’s, the idea was still-born. That the Peruvian Jesuit had been

¹ Ch. iii. Edit. 1780, p. 49.

anticipated, at least in one instance, and that more than thirteen hundred years before his day, we now know upon unexceptionable evidence. The account of this, which only came to light a few years since, is found in the Gaulish lady's note-book, best known as the Pilgrimage of St. Silvia,¹ where we learn the singularly interesting fact, that in the city of Jerusalem, within the basilica built by Constantine over the site of the Holy Sepulchre, there was celebrated at the end of the fourth century a three hours' service on Good Friday, closely akin in spirit to that devised by Father Mesia. It is to be feared that the piety of modern days cannot bear comparison with that of St. Silvia and her contemporaries, but the object of our present service is identical with that of the assembly which she describes in the following terms :

¹ First published by Signor Gamurrini, in 1887, from a MS. at Arezzo. It has been reprinted by Duchesne as an Appendix to his *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, and in other collections. An English translation may be found among the publications of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society.

But when (on Good Friday) the sixth hour has come, the people assemble in the court before the Cross, and there they are packed so tightly that it is hardly possible even to open the doors. The Bishop's chair is placed before the Cross, and from the sixth to the ninth hour nothing is done but read those passages of the Scripture and the Holy Gospels which have reference to the Passion of our Saviour. . . . And at the several lections and prayers there is such emotion displayed and lamentation of all the people as is wonderful to hear. For there is no one, great or small, who does not weep on that day during those three hours, in a way which cannot be imagined, that the Lord should have suffered such things for us.

And thereupon when the ninth hour (three o'clock) approaches, that passage is read from the Gospel according to St. John where our Lord gave up the ghost; and when this has been read, a prayer is said and the assembly is dismissed.

When we remember the extraordinary rigour of the Lenten fast amongst these Eastern Christians, many of whom passed five consecutive days in the week absolutely without food, and all of whom seem to have abstained for periods varying from twenty-

four hours to three days,¹ we shall better be able to understand the cost at which this pious exercise of compassion with the Three Hours of our Saviour's Agony was carried out. Nearly the whole of the preceding night had been spent by these early Christians of Jerusalem, both young and old, in contemplation and prayer on the Mount of Olives. In the grey of the early morning they had returned to the city to snatch a few brief hours of slumber in their homes, but as early as eight o'clock, a.m., the exercise had begun, as St. Silvia informs us, of the kissing of the relic of the True Cross. The Bishop sat, holding the sacred wood in his hand, with the deacons around him. Each worshipper then came up in turn, bowed down, touched the relic with his forehead and his eyes, kissed the wood of the Cross and the title, and then passed on. If any one would convince himself how abso-

¹ These things sound incredible, but they all rest upon the high authority of St. Silvia's narrative, and they are confirmed by the statements of St. Epiphanius and St. Jerome.

lutely identical in spirit are the devotions to the Passion now practised, say, for instance, in the “ Three Hours,” or the Stations of the Cross, with those of the early Christians in the fourth century, let him read such authentic memorials of that age as the Pilgrimage of St. Silvia, the Hymns of St. Ephraem, or the still earlier fragments of St. Melito of Sardis.¹ Whatever objection may be raised against the exercise introduced, or should we not rather say, revived, by Father Mesia, it cannot rightly be called new-fangled, or even “ un-primitive.”

HERBERT THURSTON.

¹ Some few specimens of these have been cited by the present writer in a pamphlet entitled *Dean Farrar on the Observance of Good Friday*.

ON THE SEVEN WORDS OF CHRIST
ON THE CROSS.

A PRAYER FOUND IN THE WORKS OF THE
VENERABLE BEDE.

Blessed be the Sweet Name of Jesus Christ our Lord God, and of the Most Sweet Virgin Mary, His Mother, now and for ever. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, who while hanging on the Cross, at Thy life's close, spake seven words, that we might always have those holy words in remembrance, I beseech Thee, by the virtue of those seven words, that Thou wouldst forgive and spare me, whatever I have sinned and misdone by the seven deadly sins, or their fruits, namely, through pride, avarice, lust, envy, anger, gluttony, and sloth.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, as Thou saidest, "Father, forgive

those who crucify Me," make me for love of Thee to forgive all who wrong me. And as Thou saidest to Thy Mother, "Woman, behold thy Son," and to Thy disciple, "Behold thy Mother," make Thy love and true charity unite me to Thy Mother. And as Thou saidest to the thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," make me so to live that at the hour of death Thou mayest say to me, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." And as Thou saidest, "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabacthani," which is, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" make me to say in all times of sorrow and tribulation, "O Lord, my Father, have mercy on me a sinner, rule me, my King and my God, who hast redeemed me with Thine own Blood." And as Thou saidest, "I thirst," that is, for the salvation of the Holy Souls, who were in Limbo expecting Thy coming, make me always to thirst to love Thee, the fountain of living water, the fountain of eternal light, and to desire Thee with my whole heart. And as Thou saidest, "Father,

into Thy hands I commend My Spirit," make me in my last hour, to be able to say fully and freely, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Receive me coming to Thee, because Thou hast now set¹ a certain time to my life." And as Thou saidest, "It is finished," which signifies that the sorrows Thou didst bear for us, miserable sinners, are now ended, make me deserve, when my soul goes hence, to hear that most sweet word of Thine, "Come, My beloved soul, for now have I resolved to make an end of thy pains ; come, and with Me, and with My saints and elect, enter into My Kingdom, to feast, and rejoice, and dwell therein for ever and evermore." Amen.

¹ The printed editions read, "Quia *non* constituisti certum tempus vitæ meæ," where *non* seems to be a misprint for *jam*.

THE DEVOTION
TO THE
THREE HOURS OF THE AGONY
OF
JESUS CHRIST OUR REDEEMER.

BY FATHER ALONSO MESIA, S.J.

The Exercise begins with the recitation of the
Veni Creator Spiritus.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come
From Thy bright heavenly throne :
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all Thy own.

Thou who art called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The Living Spring, the Living Fire,
Sweet Unction and True Love.

Thou who art sevenfold in Thy grace,
Finger of God's right hand ;
His promise teaching little ones
To speak and understand ;

Oh, guide our minds with Thy blest light,
With love our hearts inflame ;
And with Thy strength which ne'er decays,
Confirm our mortal frame.

Far from us drive our deadly foe ;
True peace unto us bring ;
And through all perils lead us safe
Beneath Thy sacred wing.

Through Thee may we the Father know
Through Thee th' Eternal Son,
And Thee, the Spirit of them both,
Thrice-blessed Three in One.

All glory to the Father be,
With His co-equal Son ;
The same to Thee, great Paraclete,
Whilst endless ages run. Amen.

Then is sung the INVITATION in the following words :

*For His faithless people, Jesus, the gentle Lamb, is about to die, nailed to the rood on Calvary. Whoever would show himself a loyal follower, let him not lose these gracious moments, but let him draw near to listen to His dying words.*¹

¹ It has seemed better to be content with a prose rendering of the Spanish verses, the original of which will be given in each case in a footnote.

Por su pueblo fementido,
Ya clavado en un madero
Va Jesus, manso cordero,
Sobre el Gólgota á morir.

Quien de serle fiel se precia,
Ah ! no pierda estos momentos,
Y sus últimos acentos
Presto, presto venga á oír.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION.

As faithful Christians who love our Saviour Jesus, and who have been bought and redeemed, at the price of His most precious Blood, Death, and Passion, from the slavery of sin and the devil, we ought to contemplate, with the greatest attention and reverence, the anguish and torments which our beloved Redeemer suffered on the Cross during the three hours of His agony—torments so excessively cruel that, according to St. Bernard, no human understanding could comprehend or created tongue express them.

From the sole of our Saviour's foot to the crown of His head no part remained whole. Consider Him well, O my soul, one huge wound from head to foot: His shoulders and His whole body torn by whips and scourges—His breast weakened by blows—His head horribly pierced by thorns—the hair of His beard torn off from the flesh—His face covered with contusions from the blows—His veins emptied of their blood—His mouth parched with thirst—His tongue tormented with bitterness from the gall and vinegar—His feet and hands

pierced with great nails, whilst the wounds they have made are gradually lengthened by the weight of His body—His heart afflicted, and His soul ready to depart, overwhelmed with insupportable sorrow and anguish. And yet in truth it was not this which most afflicted Him—it was His own will that delivered Him up to the torments of the Cross. What pierced His Heart most during His agony was the knowledge He had of our sins, and of the small return we should make for so much love. It was our ingratitude that caused Him to feel the agony of death. Ah! who can reflect on it without horror? Where is he who will not deplore the evil of sin from the bottom of his heart, since it is sin alone that has caused our beloved Redeemer to suffer such a mortal agony?

During these three long hours of terrible torment, in which the waters of bitterness could never quench the flame of His charity, He offered His Life and His Blood as a sacrifice to His Eternal Father for our happiness. During these three hours, although with our eyes we do not see Him, He had us incessantly present to His mind, to offer Himself for each individual of us, as if each had been the only creature in the world, and the sole object of His love. During these three hours He saw the least of our sins with all its circumstances as clearly as He does at the

moment we commit them, being so deeply penetrated with grief at the sight, that out of compassion He offered His most precious Blood in satisfaction for them. During these three hours He wrested the handwriting that was against us out of the hands of the devil, the prince of this world, nailed it to the Cross, and effaced it with His Blood. During these three hours, at the price of His bitter agony, He purchased from His Eternal Father all the treasures His Bounty had to give, viz., all the good thoughts, holy inspirations, and Divine helps, with which we have been favoured. O blessed mindfulness of our most sweet Redeemer! O the boon of those three golden hours employed for our deliverance from guilt, during which we were present not only to the memory of our loving Saviour on Mount Calvary, but near to His Sacred Heart burning with love and infinite charity. O Christian souls! how can we repay what we owe our most sweet Jesus, unless, during these three hours, we try to prove in turn our own great love for Him?

Let us, therefore, address ourselves to the Eternal Father, our God and our Judge. Inspired with confidence by the agony of Jesus our Redeemer, let us say to Him, in all humility and affection of our hearts: O Eternal Father! supreme Judge and Lord of our souls, whose justice is incompre-

hensible ! since Thou hast ordained that Thy most innocent Son should bear the burden of our immense debts, look down, we beseech Thee, upon His excruciating agony and sufferings which He is enduring during these three hours on account of our crimes. Deign to accept the ransom so worthy of Thy Majesty, which He offers Thee of His Blood, in order that Thy justice may be appeased. Let Thine indignation cease, O Lord, and since Thou art now abundantly satisfied, grant that we, being freed from our debts by the three hours' agony which Thy Son Jesus suffered through His immense love for us, may deserve to obtain what He asks in our name, viz., the pardon of our sins, and the powerful assistance of Thy grace, now, and at the hour of our death.

Here all kneel down to meditate on what has been read ; during which time some appropriate music may be played or sung, together with the following verses :

*Come to Calvary, Christian souls, for our sweet Jesus from the Altar of the Cross wishes to speak to your souls to-day.*¹

When they are seated again the priest reads aloud the First Word.

¹ Al Calvario, almas, llegad,
Que nuestro dulce Jesus,
Desde el ara de la cruz
Hoy á todos quiere hablar.

THE FIRST WORD,

Uttered by our Saviour on the Cross.

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW
NOT WHAT THEY DO.

Behold our Heavenly Master sitting exalted in His doctor's chair, the gibbet of the Cross. Hitherto He has kept profound silence, and now He opens His Divine lips to teach the world in seven words the most sublime doctrine of His love.

Be attentive, O my soul!—animate all thy powers:—it is God Himself who teaches thee: He will demand a strict account of these seven lessons. O Jesus, full of love for us! O Divine Master! speak—speak, O Lord, Thy children hear Thee.

All nature is disturbed at beholding the sufferings of its Creator. The earth is covered with a thick darkness; an earthquake rends the rocks asunder, and bursts open the graves; the angels are horror-stricken in beholding their Lord in such cruel torments; the devils are raging with anger, because the chastisement which men deserve for their sins is not immediately inflicted on them, as it was upon themselves. We might imagine

that all nature, irritated against sinners, demanded justice and vengeance of the Eternal Father: *Usquequo, Domine, sanctus et verus, non vindicas sanguinem Filii tui!* How long, O Lord, just and holy, wilt Thou delay to wreak Thy vengeance upon sinners for the Blood of Thy innocent Son, and for all the injuries committed against Him? We might imagine that at the moment this cry made itself heard, Divine Justice was about to discharge the thunders of its anger to avenge itself on criminal mankind.

But the Redeemer of the world, displaying His infinite charity, raises His nearly sightless eyes to His Eternal Father, testifying His obedience, and says: *My Father and my Lord, restrain the arm of Thy justice. I conjure Thee by this Cross upon which I die, by the Blood I shed without ceasing, I entreat, I demand of Thee to pardon sinners the crimes which have placed Me on this Cross.*

Father! forgive them,—they know not what they do.

O sinful soul! hearken attentively to this *first word*. Listen to Jesus, as He calls upon His Father who was your Father also from all eternity. Behold the greatness of your origin; you are no less than the child of an Eternal God. O Eternal Father! can I then call Thee my Father,—I, who am so ungrateful and guilty a child? What strange blind-

ness has separated me from Thee? What an unaccountable folly to despise Thy caresses and Thy grace for the vile love of creatures? Into what a miserable state have my sins brought me? Whither do my passions lead me? What a wretched condition I find myself in when I offend Thee. O most affectionate Father! I am miserable in my sins; to whom shall I turn my eyes? I will turn them towards Thee, O Father of Mercy. But how can so ungrateful a sinner presume to return and appear in the presence of a Father whom he has so grievously offended? Yes, return, O afflicted soul! return—for God is always your Father. I will return; but—miserable wretch as I am—my courage fails me on account of my iniquities: my crimes are without number, and I fear lest those looks of love should be converted into looks of anger:—it is better to die than approach Him. Go, I say, repenting soul, go—for He is your Father; and this Jesus, whom your sins have crucified, is your Brother: it is He who presents you to His Father;—it is He who beseeches Him to pardon you, and offers His Blood for your sins. O Jesus, O loving Brother, give me those blessed feet that I may kiss them with my lips, and bathe them with my tears. What! is it Thou who askest pardon for my crimes? and is it possible I do not die of love for Thee? Wretch that I am

how great is the hardness of my heart. Go then with confidence, O repenting soul. Go, sinner, and obtain pardon. Behold, Heaven, moved with pity, interests itself in your behalf. Your most merciful and compassionate Saviour prays thus to His Eternal Father for you : *O Father, behold at Thy feet these miserable sinners ! remember not, O Lord, that they have crucified Me, but rather that I die for them : instead of their sins, remember My love : not their ingratitude, but the Blood that I have shed. Look not upon their sins, but upon the life I offer for them on this Cross.*

Father ! forgive them,—they know not what they do.

O infinite charity of our gracious Saviour, the flames of which the cruel waters of tribulation could never extinguish !—O what sublime doctrine has He not taught us in this *first word* ! Hearken, O my soul, how He excuses those who crucified Him—how He pardons His most cruel enemies, and in them all sinners who have offended Him, and who by their offences have nailed Him to the Cross. *Father ! forgive them,—they know not what they do.* Learn, O my soul, from the example of Jesus, never to exaggerate the faults of others, or to resent the affronts you may receive. Learn to excuse the offences of your neighbour, even though he should be your enemy ; never put an unfavour-

able interpretation on his actions, but attribute his errors to ignorance, inadvertency, zeal, or any other cause, rather than an evil intention. O what a terrible burthen is laid on revengeful souls by this word of our Lord ! He beseeches His Eternal Father to pardon the many criminal words and actions wherewith you insult and crucify Him, and yet you nourish rancour in your heart, and refuse to pardon a trivial word, or slight affront, for His sake. O unaccountable obstinacy ! What feeling of Christianity can remain in the soul of him who has no compassion for his enemy ? If you care only for those who flatter you, and you hate those who offend you, what difference is there between you and a heathen ? Why then do you call yourself a Christian ? Reflect seriously on this truth, and be assured that Jesus Christ will treat you in the same manner—He will refuse to you what you deny to your brother. If you refuse to speak to him, or to look at him ; if you refuse to offer him your hand—in the same manner shall you to a certainty be treated by your Lord. You will hear no consoling word from His lips, nor will He vouchsafe to cast upon you one glance of compassion. Forgive then, O Christian, if you would be forgiven by Jesus.

O Eternal Father, since Thou wilt pardon the innumerable sins I have committed against Thy

Divine Majesty, I do forgive all my enemies, not only once, but a thousand times for love of Thy most holy Son. Pardon me, O Lord, I knew not what I did when I offended Thee ; and if, on account of my ingratitude, I do not deserve to be heard, Thy most precious Son has merited forgiveness in my stead. Through His Blood and agony I therefore crave Thy pardon ; forgive me, Lord, I knew not what I did.

Mercy!—O God of pity ! for the sake of Thy beloved Son Jesus.

Here all kneel down and meditate on *the First Word* of Jesus on the Cross. In the meantime the following words may be sung, or some other music played.

*I confess, O Jesus, that I was once Thy enemy—
but intercede for me and I shall surely obtain pardon.
When I was wayward I offended Thee, but I knew
not what I did. Sweetest Jesus of my soul, pray to
Thy Father for me.*¹

¹ Pues que fuí vuestro enemigo,
Mi Jesus, como confieso,
Rogad por mí, que con eso
Seguro el perdon consigo.
Cuando loco te ofendí,
No supe lo que me hacia ;
Buen Jesus del alma mia,
Rogad al Padre por mí.

In thanksgiving for the pardon our Lord asked for us, recite five times, or oftener, what follows :

Be Thou praised and blessed for ever, O crucified Lord, for the pardon of our sins which Thou hast obtained for us.

Make the following Acts :

I believe in God :—I hope in God :—I love God above all things :—I am grieved for having offended Him, because He is the Almighty and all-gracious God. I firmly purpose not to offend Him any more.

O Mary ! admirable Mother ! the Advocate of sinners, obtain for me, I beseech thee, through Jesus crucified, the pardon of my sins, and grace never more to offend Him.

THE SECOND WORD,

Addressed by our Lord to the Good Thief.

THIS DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN
PARADISE.

Consider, O devout soul, Jesus between two sinners ; one repentant, the other hardened ; one yielding to grace, the other defiant ; one saving his soul, the other losing it.

O profound mystery of predestination ! O deplorable heedlessness of mankind ! My soul, who hearest the difference between these two inscrutable destinies, examine thyself well : observe by the state of thy conscience, on which side thou art : wilt thou save thyself with the good thief, or damn thyself with the bad one ? How many are there here present who will be companions with the bad thief in Hell ? O dreadful and appalling thought ! —O man, how happens it that thou livest so negligently ; or that thou, O woman, art so indifferent, in a matter so doubtful and uncertain ? Which of the thieves do you envy most ;—the wicked rebellious thief, or the penitent and humble one ? If the latter, why do you not imitate his

humility? why do you remain on the cross of your vices with so much obstinacy? A sinner, and proud! Depart from me, thou bad thief. A sinner, but a humble one: Ah! there is mercy for thee. As the bad thief revolts against Jesus, denies and insults Him, as if He had unjustly made Himself God, so all blasphemers aggravate their awful sin of blasphemy by insult and contempt. Not so the good thief: enlightened by the Divine light of Jesus, he acknowledges Him for his God, and adores Him. O my God, how potent is Thy light! Who can steel himself against Thy appeal? Christians, render not useless those tender invitations of thy Saviour. Open your hearts to them, and let them sink deep. The happy thief turns towards Jesus, and with a plaintive voice says, *Lord, I place my whole trust in Thee:—in Thee alone I hope:—O Lord, my God and my Redeemer, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.* O blessed sinner! Who told thee, criminal, that this crucified Man is thy God and thy Redeemer? Stand confounded, ye judges, with shame and confusion, to hear a thief confess Jesus Christ on the Cross, whilst you so obstinately deny Him notwithstanding all His miracles. How many Christians there are who confess Him with their lips, whilst they deny Him by their works! What sort of a confession of Christ dost thou

make, O man, that art the victim of thy passions, or thou, woman, lost to shame and modesty? So far from being firm in your confession unto death like the good thief, you have scarcely made it before you fall back into your vices and iniquities. What sort of a confession is this? Does your conduct resemble that of the good or the bad thief? of the penitent or the reprobate?

No sooner had Jesus Christ heard the voice of the thief, who acknowledged Him for his Lord, imploring pardon for the past, than He instantly granted his request,—absolved him from his sins, and remitted all the punishment he had merited. *This day*, said He, *thou shalt be with Me in Paradise*. Yes, this day—this Friday of My sorrows. O great day! is there any one here present who will not make profit of this hour? O happy sinner! blessed penitent! you find yourself by the side of your Redeemer on this great day, when He holds the key of Heaven in His hand, and throws the door of salvation open to all poor sinners. To-day, Christians, there remain no more days of sorrow for man; Jesus has taken them all upon Himself. To-day pain is at an end, for Jesus has drained the chalice of pain to the dregs. To-day there is no more danger of Hell for those who repent, since Jesus by His torments has taken Hell for His own portion. To-day,

Paradise is opened to repenting sinners. To-day all is mercy—all is glory. Come then, O sinners! however enormous your crimes may be, come and enjoy this propitious time; it will cost you little—only a word of sorrow, a look, or a sigh from a penitent heart. Is it possible that on such a day as this, you can remain obdurate? O most merciful Jesus! at what other time can I find Thee more liberal, more generous, or more ready to bestow Thy manifold gifts. O most lovable Heart, overwhelmed with love and solicitude for the salvation of sinners, communicate Thy pity to the world;—inflame all hearts with the fire of Thy love, in order that the whole universe may be converted to Thee. Behold, O great God! how Hell is filling every day, not only with Jews, Heretics and Infidels, but even with Christians. What a heartrending thought!—even this very day, O my Saviour, how many souls will be lost! What a dreadful thought, that Thy Blood should be shed for so many souls in vain. Have pity, O Lord, have pity on Christians. Look favourably on Thy flock. Suffer not the devil to boast of so many triumphs. Let all be saved this day, on which Thou so liberally offerest pardon to all. Let all be saved, O Lord! and, repenting with the good thief, may we all confess Thee to be our God and our Redeemer. May we

all sincerely deplore our past sins ;—may we firmly purpose to amend our lives, and make a sincere confession of our wrong-doing. For this end, O Lord, grant us a sincere sorrow, that to-day Thou mayest remember us in Thy Kingdom.

Here all kneel down and meditate on what has been read, while the following words are sung :

*Reverently, O Jesus, the Good Thief implores Thy mercies. I likewise beseech Thee pardon of my iniquities. If to the repentant thief, Thou promisest a reward in Heaven, may I not also, my Saviour, hope confidently for the same.*¹

Then repeat five times the prayer of the Good Thief.

Have pity on me, O Lord, and in Thy mercy remember me when Thou comest into Thy Heavenly Kingdom.

Then,

I believe in God. I hope, &c., *as on page 57.*

¹ Reverente el buen Ladron
Imploró vuestras piedades ;
Yo tambien de mis maldades
Os pido, Señor, perdon.
Si al Ladron arrepentido
Dais lugar allá en el Cielo,
Ya yo tambien sin recelo
La gloria, mi Dueño, os pido.

THE THIRD WORD,

Addressed by our Lord to His most Holy Mother.

WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON : SON, BEHOLD
THY MOTHER.

Our Lord, from the height of His Cross, is looking down upon His blessed Mother, whose heart is sunk in an abyss of anguish, and yet He opens before her a new abyss of anguish by giving her all mankind to be her children in the person of *St. John*.

O most afflicted Mother ! what a piercing sword must it not be, that thus so deeply wounds thy tender heart ? Thy Son Jesus commends all sinners to thee, that thou mayest receive them for thy children in His place. O heartrending exchange ! thou lovest thy most amiable Son Jesus, and in His stead receivest sinners, nay, even such perverse and obstinate sinners, as have repeatedly crucified Him by their sins. O most sorrowful Lady, what a torment to thy tender heart, already deeply wounded without this new stab. What ! so ungrateful a wretch committed to thy care !—so grievous a sinner to be adopted for

thy child! O infinite charity of our Saviour towards sinners, in confiding them to His own blessed Mother to be their Mother also. O incomparable mercy of the compassionate Mother of Jesus! who, full of love and gentleness, presses the whole world to her bosom, with all tender solicitude and maternal affection. O Refuge of Sinners, how shall we express our gratitude for so great, so heroic an act, by which thou hast vouchsafed to accept us for thy children?—By what obedience, by what services, can we render ourselves worthy of so great a favour? O happy sinners! reflect with joy on the eminent dignity of Mary, your Mother. Mary, who is the Mother of God: a Mother, full of grace; a Mother, the mirror of sanctity and purity, and this Mother your Mother also. Alas! what a contrast between so holy a Mother and such perverse children:—between a Mother so pure and children so corrupt. O great Queen of Heaven, take us now under thy protection, and make us children worthy of thee. Where is the Christian, who with the greatest submission and confidence ought not to acknowledge thee for his Mother. Hell trembled at hearing the words of Jesus:—the devils raged with envy. Harken, O man! listen, O Hell! Mary is the Mother of sinners,—the Mother of the just,—the Mother of all. O blessed Lady, I kiss thy sacred feet a

thousand times, and exclaim with a voice that I wish might echo through heaven and earth, *However unworthy I am to be called the child of Mary, yet, O great Queen, obtain that I may one day behold thee, and love thy Son Jesus, as much, if possible, as thou thyself lovest Him.* O devout souls, look up to Jesus who gives you to His Mother's care, and, in her, bestows on you all the riches of His mercy, which you will never obtain without the intercession of Mary. Through her we obtain pardon from her Son, together with all His precious graces. O Jesus, inexhaustible fountain of love and generosity, what a boundless love must have been Thine to love us with so much tenderness. Since Jesus, O my soul, has said to thee, *Ecce Mater*, Behold thy Mother! surely thou art bound to contemplate her, to meditate on her graces with all thy powers and faculties. Consider her well, O my soul, lift up thine eyes, raise thy whole heart to her; for she also says to thee, *Ecce Mater*. I am your Mother, consider me as such. Behold her oppressed with grief on account of your sins. Sympathize with her in the sorrow she feels for you. She prays for you:—she implores mercy and pardon for you. Beseech her by her sorrows to look upon you as her child, and to obtain for you all necessary help, now, and at the awful hour of death. O Mother of God, prove

thyself my Mother also. Ah! turn those merciful eyes of thine upon me, beloved Mother. Remember the inexpressible anguish which we cost thee at the foot of the Cross. Let not the excessive grief thou didst then suffer be all in vain. May thy sorrows and thy holy patronage prove a powerful assistance to me in my last agony. To-day, O amiable Mother! on this day I would fain show myself thy child, even were I to lay down my life in love and sorrow at the foot of the Cross here. Welcome, O happy death! Would that I might die at the feet of Mary my Mother, and at the feet of Jesus so full of love for me.

Here all kneel and meditate, &c.

*Jesus in His last moments gives us to-day to His Virgin Mother. O Mary, who can understand what thou then must have suffered? accept me for thy child and be to me a Mother, as I now promise thee loyal obedience.*¹

¹ . Jesus en su testamento
A la Virgen hoy nos da :
Oh Maria ! Quién podrá
Explicar tu sentimiento?
Hijo vuestro quiero ser :
Sed vos mi Madre, Señora,
Que os prometo desde ahora
Finamente obedecer.

In thanksgiving to Jesus for having given us Mary for our Mother, let us recite five times the following prayer :

Most sweet Jesus, we return Thee infinite thanks for having given Thy blessed Mother, Mary, to be our Mother also.

Afterwards address yourself to her :

O sorrowful Mary, our Mother, pray for thy sinful children now, and at the hour of our death.

Then,

I believe in God, &c., *as on page 57.*

THE FOURTH WORD,

Uttered by our Lord on the Cross.

MY GOD! MY GOD! WHY HAST THOU
FORSAKEN ME?

After our Saviour had fulfilled in every point all that belonged to the office of Redeemer of the world, after He had besought pardon for sinners, and chosen Mary His own Mother for the Mother of us all, He began to feel in the interior of His holy Soul, the greatest pains and desolations, even the agony and pangs of death. Weakened as He was, and exhausted by loss of blood, the ingratitude of mankind took strong possession of His mind. He saw, on the one hand, the crimes of the wicked, together with the pusillanimity of the good; and, on the other, the infinite love of His Father to man, His favourite creature; the stubborn obstinacy of infidels; the forgetfulness of His mercies; the contempt of His holy Passion, the number of souls who would be lost eternally, and the little profit mankind would derive from all His sufferings. He saw, moreover, the sorrows of His Holy Mother, the timidity of His disconsolate

disciples, and the cruel persecutions which His immaculate Spouse, the Holy Catholic Church, would hereafter undergo. To all these afflicting thoughts were added His bodily pains and torments. His sacred Head pierced with thorns, the sharp points entering His temples; His merciful eyes half-closed by blood and dust; His shoulders lacerated by stripes, His chest oppressed, and His feet and hands transpierced by heavy nails. In truth, O my Saviour, Thy sorrows are as infinite as Thy patience! In this state He prays to His Heavenly Father for the salvation of the whole world; but foreseeing that His Passion and Death would avail nothing to an infinite number of men, who, through their own fault, would lose their souls for ever, He entered upon His agony, and the depth of His sorrow increased every moment as He realized more and more that His Heavenly Father allowed Him to suffer without any consolation. Finding Himself thus abandoned, even by His Father, and sinking under the load of sins which crushed Him with their weight, He at length fell into so great, so sensible, so bitter a dereliction, and so cruel an anguish of soul, that He could not refrain from expostulating with His Eternal Father in these terms of reproach: *My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?*—O most lovable Saviour, the cause of Thy desolation was none other than

my sins. Contemplate then, O my erring soul, the terrible dereliction which the Son of God suffered on account of thy wilfulness. Tremble lest God should abandon thee also, and being abandoned by Him, whither canst thou fly for refuge?—Why, O my soul, art thou so perverse? *Ut quid dereliquisti me? Why* hast Thou forsaken me? Ah! why? Answer thy Saviour, who asks thee as He hangs in agony on His Cross: Why wilt thou lose thy soul? why wilt thou render the Blood I have shed for thy redemption of no avail?—Ah! why?—For things that are in themselves so vile? for a moment of degrading pleasure, a fleeting interest which fades into thin air, and vanishes in disappointment?—*Ut quid?*—answer Him then. O my soul! melt into tears and sorrow. O my Jesus!—*Ut quid?* Why do I persist in wrecking my soul, when I behold Thee nailed to the Cross in order to save it? shall I damn myself whilst Thou art shedding Thy Precious Blood for me? shall I so shamefully abuse Thy mercy? No, my Saviour, it shall never be. My tears bespeak my sorrow and repentance:—abandon me not, O my Jesus, I beseech Thee by Thy holy dereliction.

Here all kneel and meditate, &c.

*The beloved Son of God sees Himself abandoned by His Eternal Father. Ah! cursed be my sins that were the cause of this. Whoever wishes to console Jesus in His terrible sorrow, let him sincerely say: My God, forgive me, I wish to sin no more.*¹

That our Lord may never abandon us, recite five times what follows :

Most sweet Jesus! by Thy most holy dereliction, abandon us not, neither during our lives, nor at our death.

Then to our Lady :

Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, protect us now and at the hour of our death.

Then,

I believe in God, &c., *as on page 57.*

¹ Desamparado se ve
De su Padre el Hijo amado ;
Ah ! maldito mi pecado,
Que de esto la causa fué.
Quien quisiera consolar
A Jesus en su dolor,
Diga de veras : Señor,
Me pesa, no más pecar.

THE FIFTH WORD,

Uttered by our Lord on the Cross.

I THIRST.

Can any one fail to understand the causes which aggravated the thirst of our most sweet Saviour in that hour of anguish? His tongue, the instrument of so many marvels, cleaved to the roof of His mouth; His loving lips were parched by the bitterness of His tortures; the moisture of His body had been drained from Him through all His wounds and through His sweat of blood. Indescribable, therefore, was the thirst which tormented Him with ever-increasing agony; until at last, in hoarse but plaintive tones, He uttered the word, *I thirst*. O most sweet Lord, what kind of thirst is it that torments Thee? what else but an insatiable thirst for our salvation;—a thirst far greater than the bodily thirst which Thou endurest,—an ardent and inflamed thirst for the salvation of souls;—a thirst which can only be quenched by the tears of converted sinners. As if He had said: *In the midst of the torment and agony in which you now behold Me, there remains*

no other consolation for me but the sighs and tears of penitent souls. Weep then, O lovers of Jesus! lament and bewail your sins. He thirsts!—He hangs in His death agony!—oh, ye fountains, streams, and rivers, give tears to my eyes to enable me to assuage the thirst of my agonizing Saviour. Ah! who is he, who will not henceforth shudder at the very thought of committing one mortal sin which occasions so much pain to our suffering Lord? He thirsts for the salvation of souls,—for the extermination of sin.—*I thirst.*—O my Saviour, who will give Thee refreshment? who will bring back a wandering sheep to Thee? I will, O Lord. Since the thirst that torments Thee is a thirst for souls, I will seek for sinners; I will endeavour to lead them home. I will teach Thy ways to the weak and ignorant; I will exhort sinners both by word and example; that many may be converted to Thee. *I thirst.*—O my Saviour, from whence proceeds this thirst?—From a still more vehement degree of love.—Remember, O Lord, that Thou wilt have legions of Virgins, Martyrs, and Confessors, who will die for most fervent love of Thee. Mary, Thy Mother, dies for love of Thee;—Thy dear Magdalen,—Thy spouses Catharine, Teresa, Ludgarde, and innumerable others, die also for love of Thee. *Sitio*—I thirst. Love never says, *It is enough.* O Christians!

we must die with Jesus, who bears so ardent a thirst for our salvation:—we must die to the world, which bears so little love towards Him. *Sitio*—I thirst, that the whole world should be converted! O my God, Thy Apostles will convert whole kingdoms and millions of souls to Thee. *I thirst*—I desire still more. The great St. Dominic, St. Francis, and many other zealous Saints, O Lord, will win souls to Thee by their miracles and preaching, even from the remotest parts of the earth. *Sitio*—I thirst. The renowned St. Ignatius and his Society, will bring back to Thee numbers of heretics, infidels, and sinners; and his sons will carry the fire of Thy love into distant nations; and the illustrious Xavier will convert a new world to Thee. *Sitio*—I thirst for still more. O obdurate sinners! reflect on the vehement thirst which your adorable Redeemer feels for your salvation, and the little anxiety it causes you. Is it possible that you can still thirst after the riches, vanities, and pleasures of the world, which cause you to run on so rapidly to your destruction? Oh, sin no more, since you behold Jesus so ardently desirous of your salvation. Let your tears now wash away the stains of your sin; to what other purpose would you reserve them? Bewail them then with your tears, and you will thus quench His thirst. O my Saviour, who can

quench it, since love never says, *It is enough*. Be Thou Thyself, then, the assuager of Thy thirst in communicating to us an ardent desire rather to suffer death than offend Thee. Let us die then, O Christian souls, of love, and endeavour to lessen the thirst of Jesus with the tears of repentance, sorrow, and contrition.

Here all kneel and meditate, &c.

*Jesus Christ says He is thirsty, and if thou wishest, O Christian soul, to assuage the thirst which is consuming Him, give Him some of thy tears to comfort Him. The gall which the Centurion offers Him He will not drink of;—how then canst thou expect our Saviour to drink the bitterness of thy sins?*¹

Here, to alleviate the thirst of Jesus, give Him your heart, saying five times :

My most sweet Jesus feels the pain of thirst :
I give Him my heart.

Then,

I believe in God, &c., as on page 57.

¹ Sed dice Cristo que tiene ;
Mas si quieres mitigar
La sed que le llega á ahogar,
Darle lágrimas conviene.
La hiel que brinda un ministro
Si la gusta, no la bebe :
Cómo quieres tú que pruebe
La hiel de tu culpa Cristo ?

THE SIXTH WORD,

Uttered by our Lord on the Cross.

IT IS CONSUMMATED.

The prophecies of the Old Testament, and the sovereign decrees of God, are now accomplished : the immense debt of sinners is cancelled ; the just have obtained salvation at a price proportionate to its value ; a covenant is concluded between God and man ; the tyranny of the devil is overthrown ; the triumph of glory begins. And now our adorable Saviour, after having terminated His mission as Redeemer of the world, has reached the extremity of His agony ; He is now at the gates of death, and offers His sweet life for sinners. Enter, O my soul ! enter into His blessed Heart, and from thence behold all the prayers which will be made to His Eternal Father, even to the end of the world. He accepts them, makes them His own ; it is through His Passion and Death that all these prayers have received that favourable answer which is already given ; all the sovereign decrees which regard this world as long as it shall endure, are here determined ; it is owing

to His Death that all the vacant thrones in Heaven will one day be re-filled.

Consider that this Sovereign Lord, by His omniscience, now beholds all your temptations and combats: He foresees your secret falls, your hidden thoughts, all the events of your life, and the many dangers to which you will be exposed of losing your soul. Consider how He applies the merits of His Death and Passion to your soul, as if you alone were the only object of His love. Return Him thanks for what He has suffered in particular for you.—And now Jesus, resolving on the accomplishment of His sublime designs, paused, as it were, to consider whether anything more remained to be done or suffered for sinners.—*Quid ultra debui facere et non feci?* what more could I do for sinners than I have done? what yet remains for Me to do? Nothing, O Redeemer of my soul, nothing remains. Thou hast exhausted all Thy charity, and Thou hast done all that Thou couldst do or suffer for our sakes.

So then our Blessed Saviour, considering that nothing further remained for Him to do, either in obedience to the will of His Father, or in reparation for the sins of the world, raising His voice cried out, *Consummatum est*, It is consummated. His Eternal Father grants Him now the salvation of those great sinners, whose penitential lives and

heroic deeds are recorded in ecclesiastical history and in the Lives of the Saints. It is at this moment that He bequeaths power to His apostles, fortitude to martyrs, purity to virgins, and courage to confessors and penitents. It is now that He beholds the field of His Church enriched by a plenteous harvest of the just: His temples erected, His religion established, idols overturned, and the glorious standard of His Cross triumphantly displayed throughout the world. This is the hour when He looks out upon the vast multitudes of souls, even among the most barbarous nations, who will be enlightened by His Cross and obtain salvation. Nothing more could be done which has been left undone. *All is consummated.* Oh, mayest Thou be for ever praised, blessed Redeemer of my soul, for Thy immense love and charity towards sinful man. Oh! let me make Thee some return for all that Thou hast accomplished. Grant, O Lord, through the effusion of Thy most Precious Blood, that I too may one day say with the most sincere compunction, *It is consummated.*—I have ceased to offend Thee; my scandals and my iniquities are at an end, *Consummatum est*: for love of Thee my criminal course of life is for ever terminated.

Consider, O Christians, what passes at this moment in the Heart of Jesus Christ: Oh,

what fire ! what love ! what tenderness ! Behold, now is the time you may obtain all the graces of Divine love, now, when Jesus tells you, *it is consummated*, all is accomplished, nothing more remains for me to do. Whither do my affections carry me ? already has the fire seized my heart : the love of Jesus burns within me : O inexpressible joy ! Ah ! ye stony hearts ! come, approach to the Heart of Jesus. O ye tepid hearts ! O obdurate sinners ! *all is consummated* : the fire of Divine charity has attained its greatest intensity in the Heart of Jesus ; cast yourselves into it ; oh, may it inflame you still more and more with His love. *Amen*. O my Saviour ! may my heart be broken with sorrow, and inflamed with Thy love.

Here all kneel and meditate, &c.

*With a broken, exhausted voice, our Saviour tells us that His Passion has paid the price of sin. Jesus is about to breathe His last and expire ; where is the Christian soul who would not die of sorrow ?*¹

¹ Con voz quebrada tu Dios
Habla ya muy desmayado,
Y dice, que del pecado
La redencion consumó.
Ya Jesus se ve espirar ;
Ya Jesus se ve morir,
Quién, pues, no llega á rendir
La vida con el pesar ?

In thanksgiving for the work of our Redemption, recite five times the following Act :

I thank Thee, O Lord, from the bottom of my heart, for having accomplished the great work of our redemption. Grant, O my Saviour, that it may avail to my salvation.

Then,

I believe in God, &c., *as on page 57.*

THE SEVENTH WORD,

Uttered by our Saviour on the Cross.

FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND
MY SPIRIT.

In this last word, our most loving Redeemer gave us the ultimate proof of His love, by teaching us what is of supreme importance at the moment of death; that is, that we should commit ourselves with unreserved and humble confidence into the hands of God, as into those of a most tender and affectionate Father. It is Jesus Christ who teaches us how to die. Let us learn then, Christians, from the death of our Saviour, what death is. Oh, what an awful passage it must be! look only at the effect it produces on a Man-God: His Sacred Humanity is changed beyond recognition—His face grows pale, His lips livid, His whole body trembles with anguish and exhaustion. Even that loud cry with which He surrendered His Soul to His Eternal Father was wrung from Him with many tears. *Cum clamore valido et lacrymis.* If a Man-God dies in this manner, O man, how can you think on death

with such indifference? You are mortal: you know you must die, and yet you lead a careless and dissipated life: you appear not to be the least concerned about it, nor to bestow even a serious thought on so terrible a moment. Christians! would you know what death is, consider it in Jesus. Look upon His agony, His struggles, His exhaustion. Is it possible that any one could defer his preparation for so dreadful a conflict to a time of so much bitterness and sorrow; or postpone so serious and arduous an undertaking, as the affair of eternal salvation, to the hour of death, an hour so full of pain and anguish? Ah! who can form a just conception of what passed in the mind of our dear Saviour at the prospect of His approaching dissolution? The conflict that passed in His Soul at the thought of its separation from His immaculate Body, formed out of the pure flesh of Mary His Virgin Mother, must necessarily have been so violent, as to shake the whole frame of His Sacred Humanity. O powerful stroke of death, that could even make a Man-God tremble! May Thy sacred name be for ever exalted and praised, O merciful Jesus! for having voluntarily permitted Thyself to suffer so bitter an agony, in order to teach me to support mine with patience and resignation to the Divine will of Thy Heavenly Father: and for having suffered all the

terrors of death, in order to render my death more peaceful and easy.

Our suffering Redeemer, seeing Himself on the point of expiring, exclaimed: *Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit*; whereby He gave us to understand that it was by His own free choice He accepted death, and to teach us the most sublime and safe method to die. *Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit*. Oh, what a heavenly! what a Divine lesson! Christ Jesus, by recommending His spirit into the hands of His Eternal Father, pays Him, not only the greatest act of honour and glory, but also testifies the immensity of His love, the height of His confidence, the depth of His humility, and absolute submission, without the least reserve, to the will of an Almighty Father, ever faithful, just and holy, who never forsakes those who place their confidence in Him, who is the infallible refuge of mercy and salvation, and who promises eternal beatitude to every soul that surrenders itself into His hands. It is by this sublime lesson from His Cross, that Jesus Christ teaches us how we should die.

O Eternal Father, ever just and holy, in union with the sacred spirit of Thy most lovable Son Jesus, and in imitation of Him, I also deliver my soul into Thy merciful hands: receive it then,

O Lord, and keep it for ever. Behold the innumerable dangers of offending Thee, where-with I am encompassed on all sides. Look on my combats and temptations, and preserve me from falling. Never suffer me, most merciful Father, to yield to the enemy, since I have, with Thy Son Jesus, surrendered my soul into Thy hands, not only at the hour of my death, but also during the remainder of my life. Have pity on me, Lord ; into Thy hands I commend my spirit, with all that I am and all that I possess.

Then all kneel down and meditate as before, during which time these words may be sung :

*To His Eternal Father His soul is now surrendered, but thou, if thou amend not thy life, into whose hands wilt thou fall? O my Jesus, from this moment I place my soul in Thy keeping. Do not look upon me coldly in that fatal hour.*¹

¹ A su Eterno Padre ya
Su espíritu le encomienda
Si tu vida no se enmienda :
En qué manos parará ?
En las tuyas desde ahora
Mi alma entrego, Jesus mio ;
No me mires con desvío
En aquella fatal hora.

The following is then read to excite sentiments of love and sorrow upon what occurred at the Death of our Lord :

Jesus our Redeemer, having commended His Soul into the hands of His Eternal Father, and seeing that the hour of His death was fast approaching, wished to let the whole world know that He died voluntarily for the love of man and in obedience to the will of His Heavenly Father. For that reason, before He breathed His last, He bent His Sacred Head upon His breast, not constrained thereto by the stroke of death, but only by the weight of His love. O incomprehensible mystery ! by this inclination of His Head Jesus testified His obedience to His Eternal Father, His goodness to man, His poverty and His humility. It was, in the first place, the excessive weight of our sins that caused His Head to bend in death. Again, He bowed His Head to take His last farewell of an ungrateful world, and breathe into it, as He had done at its creation, the breath of a new life. He inclined His Head also towards the earth, in order to invite sinners, by this signal of His love, to His tender caresses. Finally, His Head was bent that His last and most tender look might be directed towards His beloved Mother Mary, who remained at the foot of the Cross, pierced with sorrow, in order to show her how much He

reverenced her, and to give her His last sigh, as if it were to teach us how much it behoves us to direct the last sigh of our lives to God, under the sweet guidance of Mary. O Divine Master of my life, may Thy infinite charity be for ever praised for the heavenly lessons Thou hast taught us from the Cross.

Our Divine Redeemer having bowed down His sacred Head, nothing further remained to be done than to give up His Spirit to His Heavenly Father. Here the awful change commenced ; His sacred Body shuddered in separating itself from His most holy Soul. Already Death had begun to execute his office by robbing the most beautiful of all countenances of its natural complexion. Now a film settled upon the eyes ; now the nostrils grew pinched ; now the lips became livid ; now the cheeks began to fall in ; now His bosom heaved, and He could no longer draw His breath. The inanimate creation, perceiving its Creator expiring, expressed the poignancy of its anguish by terrible portents. The sun was darkened ; the moon grew red as blood ; the heavens were clouded over, the earth groaned and trembled, the rocks were rent, the whole world shuddered in horror. Stay, O Jesus ! stay yet a little while, and I will die with Thee and for Thee. Let us die together, O Lord :—if Thou diest for love of me, let me

also die for love of Thee. I do not wish to live any longer, O my God, for fear of offending Thee, and, by my sins, crucifying Thee again.

Alas ! beloved Jesus, the hour brooks no delay. I see that heaven and earth are anxiously expecting Thy blessed Death : Thy Heavenly Father is waiting with open arms to receive Thy Spirit ; the Angels long to hail Thy victory with repeated Alleluias ; the holy Patriarchs in Limbo await Thy coming, to release them from prison, and conduct them to the mansions of never-ending happiness ; the just are eager to render Thee eternal thanks for the never-fading crown of glory Thou hast purchased for them ; sinners long for it, that by sincere contrition for their past sins, and a firm purpose of amending their lives, they may escape the wrath to come, and obtain eternal salvation ; and all mankind are waiting in anxious expectation, so that they may be delivered from the fetters of sin. Our Saviour, considering how ardently the world looks for His Death, yields at length to its desire, and full of affection and tenderness for sinners, delivers up His Soul into the hands of His Eternal Father : yes, He offers up His Life and His Blood as a universal remedy for the sins of all mankind. O most sweet Jesus ! it must be time to die, since such is Thy will. Die then, O Redeemer

of my soul, and when, after Thy departure hence, Thou goest to Thy Father, beseech Him that we may never be separated from Thee; but that through the merits of Thy Precious Passion and Death, we may live and die in Thy grace and in Thy love. He can refuse Thee nothing, dear Jesus! Thou must be heard for Thy reverence in behalf of those whom Thou hast redeemed, and who are all so dear to Thy Heart.

O incomprehensible Majesty! most high God! Thou alone, O Lord of glory, Thou alone canst fully comprehend and justly appreciate the Death of our Saviour Jesus. Man, insensible man, hears it, and yet remains blind, deaf, and dumb: he beholds his God expire without being moved either to sighs or tears. He forgets that his God has suffered an ignominious Death on the Cross, in order that he might live eternally. How terrible a responsibility is this! O holy Friday! O Three Hours of agony! Awake, senseless mortals! open the eyes of your faith; see, your God is expiring for love of you, and yet no one is found who dies of love and sorrow for Him. Wo to us sinners! He dies, and no one dies with grief for having offended Him. We stand before Thy face, O God, and are not ashamed. O rocks, lend us your sensibility, that we may this day tremble and die with love and sorrow for our Redeemer Jesus.

Let us long to die with J̄esus, Christian souls,
long to die of love and sorrow for having offended
Him.

As the third hour draws near its close the *Credo* is sung,
in such wise that the words *Crucifixus et mortuus est* may
be reached as the clock strikes; and thereupon each one
present should make a fervent Act of Contrition.

The following words may also be sung :

*Now is my Redeemer dead, my beloved Father is
no more. My God, my Father, my Love, has died
nailed to a Cross. Alas! Ah! Woe is me! Burst,
O my heart, with compassion: it was for thee that
Jesus died.*¹

¹ Ya murió mi Redentor,
Ya murió mi Padre amado,
Ya murió en la cruz clavado
Mi Dios, mi Padre, mi amor.
Ay! Ay! Ay! Triste de mí!
Ay! Ay! Ay! Mi corazón,
Rómpete de compasion,
Que Jesus murió por ti.

ADDENDA.

Should any time remain before the three hours are completed, the following prayers are recited, otherwise they may be omitted.

SALUTATIONS *addressed to the Five Sacred Wounds of* JESUS CHRIST.

I. To the Sacred Wound in the Left Foot.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore the Sacred Wound in Thy Left Foot, and I return Thee heartfelt thanks for so much pain: grant me, I beseech Thee, by this pain, and by the suffering it caused Thy afflicted Mother, the pardon of all the sins I have committed against Thee by my sinful steps.

Our Father, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

II. To the Sacred Wound in the Right Foot.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore the Sacred Wound in Thy Right Foot, and I return Thee heartfelt thanks for so much pain: grant me, I beseech Thee, by this pain, and by the suffering it caused Thy afflicted Mother, a firm hope, together with the pardon of all the sins I have committed against Thee by my words and actions.

Our Father, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

III. To the Sacred Wound in the Left Hand.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore the Sacred Wound in Thy Left Hand, and I return Thee heartfelt thanks for so much pain: grant me, I beseech Thee, by this pain, and by the suffering it caused Thy afflicted Mother, an ardent charity, together with the pardon of all the sins I have committed against Thee by my sight and my other senses.

Our Father, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

IV. To the Sacred Wound in the Right Hand.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore the Sacred Wound in Thy Right Hand, and I return Thee heartfelt thanks for so much pain: grant me, I beseech Thee, by this pain, and by the suffering it caused Thy afflicted Mother, the grace of true contrition for my sins, and pardon for all the offences I may have committed against Thee by the abuse of my will, memory, and understanding.

Our Father, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. To the Sacred Wound in the Side of our Saviour.

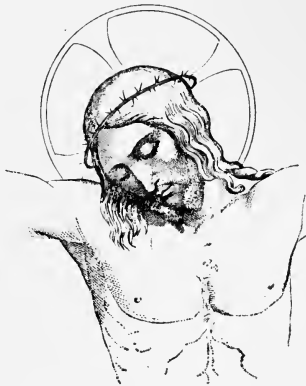
O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore the Sacred Wound in Thy Sacred Side, and I return Thee heartfelt thanks for so much pain: and as Thy most Sacred Heart was pierced by a sharp-pointed lance, and that of Thy afflicted Mother with the sword of grief, grant that mine may be so deeply penetrated by the arrows of Thy love, as cheerfully to suffer the most cruel death rather than ever offend Thee by the commission of one mortal sin.

Our Father, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

Let us say three Hail Marys and one Glory be to the Father, to our Blessed Mother Mary, in reverence for all she suffered during these Three Hours.

A PRAYER TO OUR LADY.

O most dolorous Mother! by the many bitter afflictions Thou must necessarily have suffered at the foot of the Cross during the three long hours of agony of thy Divine Son Jesus, but more especially at the moment of His sacred death, engrave, I beseech thee, His wounds and thy unspeakable grief upon my heart: assist me in my last agony; and, through thy powerful intercession at the throne of mercy, obtain for me a happy death.



“ CONSUMMATUM EST.”

(*Fra Angelico.*)

SHORT PRAYERS
OF
ST. GREGORY,
ON OUR LORD'S PASSION.

1. O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee hanging on the Cross, and wearing a crown of thorns. I humbly pray Thee, that Thy blood may deliver me from the destroying angel. Amen.

Then say, Our Father, &c., Hail Mary, &c.

2. O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee wounded on the Cross, and having gall and vinegar given Thee to drink. I beseech Thee, that Thy wounds may become the cure of my soul. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

3. O Lord Jesus Christ, I beseech Thee, through the bitterness of the pains which Thou didst suffer in the hour of death, and chiefly when Thy most holy Soul parted from Thy blessed Body; have mercy on my soul, at its quitting my body, and bring it to eternal life. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

4. O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee laid in the Sepulchre, and embalmed with myrrh and spices ; grant, I beseech Thee, that Thy Death may be my life. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

5. O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee descending into Hell, and delivering from thence Thy captives : never permit, I beseech Thee, my soul to go thither. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

6. O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee rising from the dead, and ascending into Heaven, and sitting at the right hand of Thy Father ; grant, I beseech Thee, that I may follow Thee thither, and deserve to be presented to Him by Thee. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

7. O Lord Jesus Christ, who art the Good Shepherd ; preserve the just, justify sinners, have mercy on all the faithful, and be propitious to me a miserable and unworthy sinner. Amen.

Our Father, &c. Hail Mary, &c.

Prayer to the Five Wounds.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

*Kiss the wound of the left hand of the Crucifix,
saying :*

O Jesu mine ! for love of Thee,
I love what Thy Will giveth me,
WHATE'ER it be.

Kiss the wound of the right hand, saying :

O Jesu mine ! for love of Thee,
I love what Thy Will giveth me,
WHENE'ER it be.

Kiss the wound of the left foot, and say :

O Jesu mine ! for love of Thee,
I love what Thy Will giveth me,
HOW MUCH it be.

Kiss the wound of the right foot, and say :

O Jesu mine ! for love of Thee,
I love what Thy Will giveth me,
HOW LONG it be.

Kiss the wound of the Sacred Heart, saying :

Jesus, my will is ever one with Thine,
For all things that befall me come from
Thee ;
All bring Thee glory, all bring good to
me,
Therefore in weal or woe, Thy will is
mine.

*Then press the Crucifix with tender love to
your heart, saying :*

O Jesus! sweetest Lord, I pray to Thee,
To grant me that which in Thy Heart
I see ;
Suffering, that my love may steadfast be,
And love, to suffer ever faithfully ;
Suffering, to bear all suffering for Thee,
Love, to despise all love for love of Thee.

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ROEHAMPTON:
PRINTED BY JOHN GRIFFIN.

BT 430 .M47 1899 SMC

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